



# California Public Utilities Commission

505 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94102

## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Terrie Prosper, 415.703.1366, [news@cpuc.ca.gov](mailto:news@cpuc.ca.gov)

### **PUC FORUM PROMOTES SAFETY AS RAIL TRAFFIC GROWS AND ACCIDENTS INCREASE**

SAN FRANCISCO, June 24, 2005 - The California Public Utilities Commission (PUC), working with Senator Soto, Senator Dutton, Assemblymember Baca, and others, today held a community forum on rail safety issues in the Inland Empire.

Recent accidents along railroad right-of-ways in the Inland Empire have raised concerns about the safety of local residents and businesses. As trade and port capacity grows in the region, the forum offered an opportunity for important stakeholders to come together with the PUC to identify existing problems and to explore possible opportunities to better address the concerns expressed by local representatives for the safety of thousands of people living and working along railroad right of ways.

An increase in rail traffic in the Inland Empire is expected and organizers at the Community Forum hope to reduce the growing threat to public safety. Statewide, catastrophic railroad accidents (that included deaths) have caused property damage and profound concern for many California citizens. With increasing urbanization and rapid economic growth forcing greater use of railroad corridors, more serious accidents can be expected, unless mitigated with swift action.

“The recent rash of derailments highlights the ongoing dangers posed by growing numbers of large trains rumbling through increasingly congested neighborhoods. People have the right to ask – and to know – whether enough is being done to ensure their safety,” said Senator Nell Soto (D – Pomona).

“My hope is that this safety forum can foster more cooperation among the railroads and federal and state regulators, and ultimately lead to state and federal legislation that ensures the safety of all Californians in and around our rail system,” said PUC Commissioner Dian M. Grueneich.

Existing regulatory controls and conventional industry efforts to reduce railroad accidents are not achieving satisfactory results. States like California are almost totally preempted by federal regulation from designating an area a “Local Safety Hazard” in order to prevent accidents from re-occurring in that area. The PUC believes that a multi-faceted approach is needed to decrease rail accidents, including revisions to federal laws that will enable states to share more regulatory control over railroads that operate near areas particularly vulnerable to the hazards of railroad accidents. For example, pending legislation, SJR 13, is a joint resolution from the California legislature to the U.S. Congress to amend the Federal Railroad Safety Act to increase the authority of state governments to enact railroad safety regulations.

More information on the Forum is on the PUC’s website at:  
[http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/static/\\_spotlight/railforumjune24\\_2005.htm](http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/static/_spotlight/railforumjune24_2005.htm)

For more information on the PUC, please visit [www.cpuc.ca.gov](http://www.cpuc.ca.gov).

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